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Picking Up on Social Responsibility

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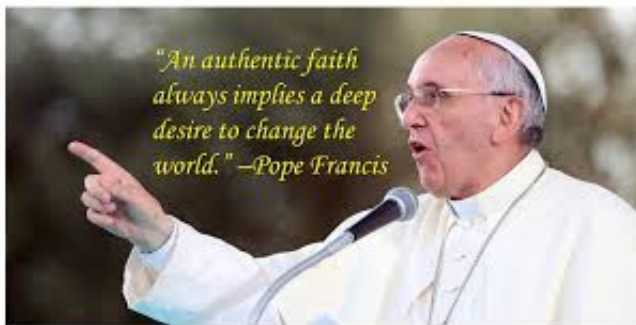
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Picking Up on Social Responsibility

by Karen Reardon



In 'Time to Clean Up' appearing in the July 31st edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer, Inga Saffron and Samantha Melamed did a commendable job identifying public eyesores and exhorting Mayor Nutter and the City to prioritize housekeeping as Philadelphia prepared to host a world religious dignitary, Pope Francis. In reflecting upon this issue however, I know these journalists did not go far enough; not in identifying the problem, not in

seeking solutions. The problem is not simply one for city government or business, and it is not a problem that Center City alone must own.

Personally, I am haunted by the litter that seems to be *everywhere* in Philadelphia: in Center City, as discussed in the article, but also in our neighborhoods and parks, on ramps as we enter and exit our roadways, alongside our waterways and rail tracks and, especially, up and down its main artery, Broad Street. Philadelphia is not responsible for the litter; she is at the mercy of us, her citizens—both corporeal and corporate. Cities belong to their citizens and depend on us to act for their benefit or are victim when we turn a blind eye to their plight. Libby Purves writes this of London, as I would of Philadelphia. ***"Every city is potentially dreadful and potentially great, and none can afford complacency."***

With all eyes now on Philadelphia having shown its promise as a world class city, we, as its citizens, have a unique opportunity, to build on that momentum. In order to do so, we must come together to reveal even more of her beauty by beautifying her. If we do so, everyone who lives here, works here, recreates here, and loves the city will be the beneficiaries of that work.

Scholarly research from Ohio State University (Bennett 2012) documents how litter is a pervasive social problem which impacts the health and well-being of inner-city residents, many of who had no role in creating the condition, but can ill afford to live in other neighborhoods. Research from the University of Pennsylvania shows how health indicators improve among residents of a neighborhood when vacant lots are cleared of litter and trimmed. Using heart rate as a physiologic marker of acute stress, research

by Eugenia C. South, MD, MHSP, at Penn reveals a “biological link between urban blight reduction strategies like vacant lot greening and reductions in stress.” Other research shared by Malcolm Gladwell in The Tipping Point documents that when neighborhoods are physically cleaned up, other improvements follow such as reduced crime and new business development. People start to see possibilities and build new habits. Imagine the possibilities if the nearly 6 million citizens of the Philadelphia area picked up even one piece of trash. What if the number were ten? Or a hundred? All infinitely possible in just one day.

Corporate Social Responsibility

So what responsibility do we as citizens and our places of business as corporate citizens have for ameliorating this problem? As institutions, many corporations control more labor and wealth than many government (Steiner & Steiner 2011). Corporate Social Responsibility (“CSR”) models represent the very different orientations a business may assume in pursuing its goals. Is it the responsibility of business simply to *maximize profit* for its owners or shareholders? Perhaps business should be more enlightened and recognize that employees, customers, vendors and the community all have a stake its decisions. Perhaps even that is not enough. Should businesses, like all good citizens, work to *act in the public good*, *helping to solve social problems*? Thoughtful business professionals and leaders struggle with these questions as well as how to balance CSR agendas with strategic business goals and objectives.



On Sunday afternoon, September 13th students from La Salle University joined me in extending our classroom work by learning about CSR through action. We picked up trash from Philadelphia’s curbs and sidewalks. It was messy, but worth the effort. What was learned? One student had this to say about it...



“My most important lesson was how easy it is to serve. One of my favorite quotes is from my hero, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, ‘Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.’ I frequently envision the impact that I hope to have ... in the future. But as this project showed, I can still make a difference now too. It doesn’t take much, beyond a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love! “

We will be back in action next year, but the initiative to clean up shouldn’t wait until then or until the next visit from a world leader. Join us now by showing Philadelphia some love. Pick up litter from her streets, sidewalks, yards and parks. Pull some weeds. Cut the lawn. I encourage you to do so, not because you are responsible for the problem, but because if we, as citizens, PULL Together, we can make an impact that will LAST in Philadelphia and take pride in knowing we, her citizens, were the

solution.



Et tu? Can people- or corporations- do well by doing good? Share your views and experiences . To post your comments just use the reply link at the top of the page.

and...To see an



interesting experiment in littering, click on the Youtube video below:

Trash Mob - Portland State University



This entry was posted in Corporate Social Responsibility and tagged Business Ethics, Lasallian business on September 29, 2015 [<http://wp.lasalle.edu/mgtl/2015/09/29/picking-up-on-social-responsibility/>] by Steve Meisel.

4 thoughts on “Picking Up on Social Responsibility”



Michael Wagner

November 23, 2015 at 5:00 pm

Michael Wagner: Business 203-01: Organizational Behavior: Professor Meisel: 11/22/15

The post “Picking Up On Social Responsibility” by Karen Reardon was interesting to me because it showed how the city of Philadelphia prepared for Pope Francis’ visit by cleaning up the streets, hanging colorful flags, and welcoming visitors from all over the world. Government officials and planning committee members wanted everything to be perfect for this grand event. Now that Pope Francis is back in Rome our city looks like it did before all of the festivities were planned. There is trash all over the sidewalks and streets and we quickly forgot what Pope Francis’ message about recycling, responsibility, and ecology for future generations.

In January 2016, LaSalle University will proudly open the doors to the brand new business building. Just like Pope Francis’ visit the administration is working hard to celebrate this wonderful occasion. I challenge every student at LaSalle to not act like citizens in Philadelphia by regressing to old ways but to demonstrate leadership by taking the initiative and keeping our campus safe and clean. In case you haven’t noticed the housekeeping and maintenance departments work extremely hard every day to provide us with a healthy and clean environment. The staff members are tired of picking up trash when they aren’t the one’s responsible for littering.

This past weekend LaSalle University had an Open House for the upcoming freshman class. Students look at the quality of facilities, attractiveness of the campus, as well as the safety of the school when making final decisions about which college to attend. As Pope Francis stressed we need to act now and stop being complacent. For the future of LaSalle University we need to come together as a community and show our pride. We are each responsible for encouraging students to respect private property and each other. We all know that a safe and clean environment will promote happier and healthier students. As the post indicated green lots make people feel more relaxed and less stressed.

The opening of the business school is an exciting time in the history of LaSalle University. We can show our appreciation by keeping the school clean and demonstrate to new Explorers that LaSalle students are leaders and go above and beyond.

**Megan Whiteley**

November 29, 2015 at 12:16 pm

Megan Whiteley

BUS. 203

I found this article to be not only true among communities but convincing to help the city of Philadelphia as well. Each individual has a responsibility as a citizen to make sure you are helping the community in which you live in. If you are a house owner in the suburbs, it is your responsibility to keep your house clean and the yard around it. The same goes as if you live in the city; the area around in which you live should be kept clean. Everyone jumped at the opportunity to clean up the city of Philadelphia when the Pope was coming to visit. I found this puzzling because I not only read about it in this article but learned about it in other class a year prior to the Popes visit. The city spent a lot of time and money cleaning up to make the city look presentable to our world leaders. However, I find it to be sad that this is the only time citizens will put effort towards making a cleaner environment.

The article also states how litter is a social problem, which impacts an individual's health. If each individual wanted to live a better life why wouldn't you want the environment around you to be clean and beautiful, why would it take a world leaders visitation to change that? As citizens it is our Social Responsibility to take action. Each individual should do their duty as a citizen and clean the environment around them. If you see litter on the ground in your neighborhood or yard you should do the right thing and pick it up. This will allow you to have potentially a healthier life because you are living in a cleaner environment.

Just like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) they struggle to help solve social problems. I agree how its not just one person who makes all the decisions in a business. All individuals should be recognized for their share in the work for example, if you are the employee, customer, vendor, or the community itself. I feel that all of these factors are important in a business and in a clean up for a big event. Although it was a big event that doesn't happen often the community and everyone around should help keep the areas pristine for a better outcome.

**Abbey Lawrence**

November 30, 2015 at 10:22 pm

BUS 203-01 Professor Meisel

I found this post to be very interesting because I have never really seen anybody write about the litter of Philadelphia, which has always surprised me because of how bad it is. Every time I leave La Salle and drive around the city, and even the outskirts of the city, I realize how bad the trash has gotten. It is

everywhere and makes me not want to live here. Every time I travel home for break, I am so excited to get home and be living in a clean place again. I am glad someone else noticed it too and decided to speak up by writing about it on this blog.

Karen Reardon proposed the idea of all of Philadelphia's citizens coming together and making Philadelphia clean. I agree that it the responsibility of keeping a city clean is that of its citizens. The city does depend on us to keep it beautiful. I think that this is a great idea, but I don't think it will happen. I believe that the city is already so dirty that its citizens don't even think they are making it any worse when they litter. When they want to litter they are probably thinking "it's already very dirty, so why not." The leaders of the city need to take initiative and start a movement to get Philadelphia clean. If it is promoted on TV, Septa buses, or just around Philadelphia, maybe people will start to realize that they can help get the city clean.

The youtube video was surprising in the beginning when everyone was walking right by the bottle. The bottle was right next to the Recycling bin, alls they had to do was reach down and pick it up. Some people just don't care enough to put forth that extra effort. It is really sad to see but the video turned around when lots of people started to pick up the bottle. The beginning of the video was a good example of how the citizens of Philadelphia act towards trash. They act like its not even there, and will not put forth the effort to pick it up and throw it away. Something needs to be done because this beautiful city that we live in is really starting to become one of the dirtiest.

**Darnell Philemon**

December 1, 2015 at 12:28 am

Based on what Karen Reardon was discussing, I would have to completely agree. It should not have to be a task to clean the street of Philadelphia or any city you dwell in, it should be something you would want to do as a civilian living there. In her post, she speaks about how dirty the streets are and it is a bad look on not only the area but the people within that area. When the Pope came to visit, it is true that there were precautions taken to ensure safety, but there was also the need to clean the areas that the Pope would be present around to make the "City of Brotherly Love" seem presentable. But what Reardon is why it that it can't always be this way is. Why is it that it must take the moment of an event for an action to take place, it is doing the same action if you only clean your home when guest are heading over. You should always want to live in a clean home, same goes for your city because it is your home. Although there are some who have no choice but to live here due to financial reasons and such, they should still make the most of it.

Karen Reardon also discusses that the filth in a specific area also affect crime rates and other details about a community. This I also agree with because a community is as strong as its weakest link therefore is one person in the community feels as though they shouldn't have to clean, no one will. Those living in filth will associate it with a place that isn't desired to live in and will begin to commit crimes because they believe no one cares about the area they call home. I personally am not from

Philadelphia but I understand and see the affect from it. I was blessed to live in a nice and clean neighborhood where the crime rate and filth was very low. The town over wasn't so lucky with filth and some say because of it there was crime while others think vice versa. The matter at hand was that there was no one in that community who took the time to want to clean up their area, while in my town neighbors were willing to clean for others at a moment's notice just to be friendly. What Reardon speaks of is true and it should be a privilege to clean such an amazing city as this one, home or no home.
